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ABSTRACT

The question of what a national language is good for has been asked and answered many times, and the validity of each answer depends on historical circumstances. Many assume that there is a direct relationship between language and nation. Leibniz argued in 1683, at a time when bilingualism was socially stratifying, that nation and language flourish together. He advocated cultivation of German as a national language in order to spread education broadly. Later, Fichte saw language as the voice of the nation and theorized about qualitative differences between languages. Humboldt wrote about the concept of nation and national character based on language. Industrialization, urbanization, and growing linguistic nationalism in Western Europe influenced the crystallization of ethnic and linguistic identities on the continent. However, the issue of political autonomy for a linguistically defined group has proven to be divisive, as in the Greek struggle against Turkish rule. In Africa, decolonization has produced new states, but language has not been a cohesive symbol or influence. In some cases, such as India, colonization and language importation have effectively denationalized the native language, and the process of decolonization reopens the question of ideology and national languages. A four-page reference list concludes the document. (MSE)

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What is a National Language Good for?

Florian Coulmas

The question What is a national language good for? is a historical question in a twofold sense: It is an old question that has been asked before many times, and answered, and it is a question every answer to which is historically conditioned. The gist of the question and the validity of every given answer depend on the historical circumstances. It is useful, therefore, to reconsider "the national language question"[1] from time to time.

Shortly after World War II, Otto Jespersen wrote the following:

> "The greatest and most important phenomenon of the evolution of language in historic times has been the springing up of the great national common languages...which have driven out, or are on the way to drive out, the local dialects purely conditioned by geographical factors" (Jespersen 1946: 39).

This statement seems to imply that there is something special about national languages that distinguishes them from others that are not national languages. Obviously, there are functional differences. Only some languages are national languages. The world is divided at present into some 160 states most of which have explicitly or implicitly designated one language as their national language. This means that there are about thirty to forty times as many languages as national languages. What are the few good for, and how do they differ from the many?

Jespersen's above quoted statement suggests that the "national common languages"--to him basically the big European standard languages associated with a given nation state--came into a position of dominance "purely conditioned by geographical factors." This is misleading. While geographical contingencies have played an undeniable role in the linguistic development of Europe, socio-historical and ideological factors were much more important. The question is how language could grow into such a powerful political symbol that it came to be seen as a sign of loyalty; that its use was, at times, outlawed or punished like that of Catalonian in Spain or that of other languages than French in post-revolutionary France (cf. Jacob and Gordon 1985); that people would kill each other or burn themselves in the street for the sake of their language, as Tamils have been reported to do in newly independent India and nowadays in Sri Lanka (cf. Hellmann-Rajanayagam 1983, Jupp 1978); that anybody even cares to listen to war cries for "the defense of our language," such as have been published recently by U.S. English,[2] a xenophobic language movement in the United States. Why, on the other hand, is Switzerland invariably cited as the odd exception (e.g. Haugen 1985) of a country where linguistic pluralism is not disruptive for the nation, or rather where the development of nationhood overcame the diversity of tongues? Why, indeed, should the peaceful coexistence of several languages within one country not always be considered a desirable goal?

The fact of the matter is that many people, especially in the Western world, nowadays take it for granted that there is a providential bond between language and nation: The idea of a natural unity of nation, state and language has proved to be one of the most successful pieces of Western political ideology since the French revolution. In the nineteenth century language became the most powerful symbol of nationalism. As Deutsch (1942) pointed out, between 1800 and 1900, the number of fullfledged national languages in Europe doubled.[3] The underlying force, which Toynbee (1965: 247) calls "the evil spirit of Linguistic Nationalism," eventually disrupted the outmoded multilingual empire of the Hapsburg Monarchy, as ever more language groups (re-)discovered and claimed their identity and political autonomy with it.

This was nationalism in the technical sense in which it is usually understood today, that is, a force that created unity across societal strata, whose coming into existence was thus intimately related to the transformation of feudal into bourgeois societies which, in turn, depended on the expansion of secular education in the vernacular languages (cf. Emerson 1960: 147). This historical scheme is often applied in explaining the nexus of language and nationalism. As the nation state is a political concept whose full vigor emerged only in response to the Napoleonic wars, the national language ideology is also often characterized as an outgrowth of the French revolution.

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"Nationalism," writes Minogue (1967: 33) "is a European invention."

Especially the Romantic movement is regularly credited, or blamed, for popularizing the national language issue and elevating language to become one of the prime paraphranalia of a nation. Herder is persistently cited in this connection (cf. e.g. Barnard 1965, Minogue 1967, Fishman 1972, Smith 1981, Edwards 1985). His influence was undeniably significant in his time and throughout the 19th century. However, while he may have been the most eloquent and passionate defender of his mother tongue as a national asset, he was by no means the first to address the topic.

From Enlightenment to Romanticism

A hundred years before Herder, Leibniz made a plea for the German language that already contained all of the important arguments concerning language, education, societal welfare and national unity. Like all of his fellow intellectuals, Leibniz wrote almost exclusively in French and Latin, yet, in his "admonition to the Germans" of 1683, he stated that "it is found in all history that usually nation and language flourish together." "Taking over a foreign language," on the other hand, "has normally brought with it loss of freedom and a foreign yoke" (Leibniz 1697).

When Leibniz wrote, there were good reasons to be concerned about the fate of the German language. Socially stratifying bilingualism was widespread, establishing an effective barrier between the nobility who conversed among themselves in French, and the common people who spoke German. Also, the Thirty Years War had left Germany devastated, while other European countries, Louis XIV's France in particular, enjoyed a period of great cultural achievement. Political and religious unity in Germany was destroyed; there was no political or cultural center. Germany was reduced to a developing country. Her intellectual and power élites were attracted by the glamour of their more advanced neighbors, and, instead of cultivating German, they used French for all purposes of higher communication.

Although Leibniz, who was a member of the Académie Française and of the Royal Society, also did just that, he realized the political implications of the neglect of the German language by the élites. It is perhaps because he held office as a high-ranking counsellor at the Court of Hanover for several decades that he had a sense of the political dimensions of language choice. While he diagnosed "a deficit in our language," especially in expressions "referring to morality, passion of the mind, social intercourse, governmental matters, and all sorts of affairs of civil and public life" (1697) he also saw very clearly "that the Germans do not lack the ability, but the resolution to elevate their language throughout" (ibid.). French was not being

used because the German language was inadequate. Rather it was the other way round: German had failed to develop and adapt to the purposes of modern communication because the élites, out of snobbery, had neglected it preferring to speak French. The problem, therefore, was to motivate the nobility and the intellectuals to speak and write German instead of French (and Latin).

This was not easy, because the upper classes had little to gain from using boorish German instead of elegant French. In the contrary, they would give up a powerful means of defending their privileges. Language was very efficiently employed as a marker of social distinction rather than unity. In order to promote the vernacular, Leibniz therefore had to persuade the élites that they, too, would benefit from the cultivation of German.

His arguments reflect the fact that he was a patriot and believed in enlightenment. "The more such [educated] people there are in a country," he wrote, "the more refined and civilized the nation, and the happier and braver its inhabitants" (Leibniz 1683). Leibniz thus highlighted the nation as the superordinate concern. He spoke of "a service to the fatherland," and contrasted the poor state of the German language in which only "few straightforward books are written...that have the right taste or savor" with that of Italian, French and English where "the splendor of wisdom is not reserved to the learned men only

but has trickled down to the mother tongue" (ibid.). Scholarly writing in the language of the people was a prerequisite of spreading education in society, and that, Leibniz argued, was for the glory and benefit of the nation. If Germany wanted to compete with her neighbors, education in the vernacular was essential. And in order to make this possible, the vernacular needed to be upgraded and refined.

Leibniz may have believed in both enlightenment and language cultivation as values in their own right, but he knew that these lofty ideals were hardly convincing enough for recruiting the élites' active support for the vernacular. Therefore, he emphasized the nation as a social bond and the significance of a cultivated language and more widely spread education for its welfare and glory. He proposed the establishment of a German-minded Society [Deutschgesinnte Gesellschaft] and became involved in founding the Prussian Academy of Science whose constitution he wrote. Furthermore, he prescribed a number of specific measures designed as a therapy for the ailing German language, such as systematic vocabulary enrichenment by recycling old words that had fallen out of use, terminology formation by drawing on native German stock, and abolishing unnecessary German words. And he strongly criticized those of his contemporaries who neglected the German language while failing to learn French properly.

It is important to note, however, that Leibniz' recommendations bore the mark of true enlightenment. Promoting the national language for him meant neither narrow-minded purism nor hostility toward other nations. He explicitly stated that he "was not of the opinion that one ought to become a puritan in language and, for superstitious fear, avoid a foreign but handy word as a mortal sin, thus debilitating oneself and depriving one's words of emphasis" (Leibniz 1683). For the cosmopolitan Leibniz, the notion of national language was a vehicle of enlightenment. The shriller tones of nationalism were only later to accompany, if not drown, the theme of "one language, one nation, one state."

However, already in the early eighteenth century, Leibniz' followers, the grammarians and lexicographers who took it upon themselves to provide the technical means of cultivating the German language that Leibniz had demanded, turned his rational concern about the decline of German into provincial pedantry. Gottsched devoted his life to writing a grammar of German as a national task. In the preface to its second edition of 1749 he took the fact that the first had sold well as an indication of patriotism (Gottsched 1749). Part of the rationale for writing a German grammar was to demonstrate to the world that the Germans had just as good and regular a language as any of their neighbors.

Another theme that Leibniz introduced into the discussion about upgrading the German language on entirely rational grounds, but which later was to receive a different ideological coating, concerns foreign words and terminology. Leibniz had observed that technical terms [Kunstwörter] made up of German morphemes were easier to understand for people with no formal education in Latin schools than Latin or Greek loan-words. As he saw it, loan- and foreign words did not have to be avoided at all cost, but, then, they also should not be used where native words were readily available. Rather than adopting such a pragmatic attitude, lexicographers like Adelung and Campe began the tradition--still prevailing in German lexicography--of distinguishing the genuinely German from foreign parts of the vocabulary and, sometimes absurdly, coining native alternatives for un-German words.

The rationalization provided for this approach was based on a deterministic view of the relation between language and conceptualization: The lexicon of a language incorporated a particular vision of the world (which should not be contaminated by foreign elements). Klopstock, for instance, a poet who also theorized about principles of writing a new German grammar and dictionary, expressed this idea very clearly. In his polemical essay Die deutsche Gelehrtenrepublik he wrote that "every language is, as it were, a repository of the most characteristic notions of a nation" (1774/1975: 120). In the Romantic movement,

this idea should be fully exploited for the purposes of nationalistic mysticism.

Leibniz had a deep interest in the diversity of languages which was, however, counterbalanced by his interest in universality. Also, as far as language use was concerned, his view was basically instrumental: Cultivating German was desirable in the best interest of spreading general education. For the Romanticists, on the other hand, cultivating German was desirable because the German language enshrined the spirit of the German nation. Leibniz, too, saw an intimate connection between language and thought. Language for him was "like a mirror of the mind" (1683). But as such it was an instrument of rational reasoning.

Fichte, by contrast, like Leibniz an eminent philosopher who advocated philanthropic devotion to knowledge as a national goal, was much less sober in his ideas concerning language and the German language in particular. He build his theoretical scaffold on the idea that a living language expresses the soul of a nation. Like Klopstock, Herder and others, he believed in determinism: The way a nation thinks and conceptualizes the world depends on its language. In his Addresses to the German Nation, which were written and delivered during the crisis of Napoleon's invasions and French occupation, Fichte stated that "those who speak the same language are linked together, before human intervention takes a hand, by mere nature with a host of

invisible ties...they are by nature one indivisible whole." Thus, "wherever a distinct language is found, there also exists a distinct nation" (Fichte 1808). In his political thinking the nation became a historical subject and the language its voice.

The idea that language somehow incorporates the soul of a nation was not the product of Fichte's mind. However, he did not stop there. He also theorized about qualitative differences between languages. His Arguments about language and "its immeasurable influence on the entire human development of a nation" (ibid.) must be read as the thoughts of an ardent nationalist who realized that under conditions of foreign domination and political fragmentation the language was virtually the only culture marker that could serve as a common bond and symbol of the nation. It was important, therefore, to set this language apart from others. Because of the élites' preference for French[4] German had a reputation of being less classy and elegant. In this respect German differed most obviously from the language of the hated Western neighbors. The problem was how this difference, which for Germans was hard to be proud of, could be exploited for nationalistic purposes. Fichte's solution was the rather stunning distinction he drew between 'living' and 'dead' languages. "A living language," he wrote, "if compared with another one, can well be highly cultivated, but it can never in itself achieve the same perfection and formation that a dead language so easily obtains" (Fichte 1808).

The distinction between living and dead languages is stunning, because by the latter Fichte did not mean Hebrew, Greek and Latin only, but French, Italian and English as well. Living languages were those with an unbroken and "pure" tradition, such as German. Dead languages, on the other hand, were languages with mixed and broken-off traditions like Latin-Celtic French or English, for that matter. French had cut off its Latin roots by becoming a language in its own right, and English, since the Norman conquest, was a mixed language altogether, whereas German constituted a continuous link with the past from time immemorial. It could not be bent and polished at will because, unlike the dead languages, it had a character. Such ideological acrobatics allowed Fichte to turn a vice into a virtue: German was not only distinct from other languages, but alive and more authentic than others incorporating, as it did, the spirit of the Urvolk. The Germans, said he, speak "a language which is shaped to express the truth" (ibid.).

Fichte not only established a rightful place for the German language in the German society, but his extravagant distinction between 'living' and 'dead' languages allowed him to single it out as a special language. It was this irrational part of his argument that proved attractive and versatile because any speech community could adapt it for its purposes.[5] Language, so the argument goes, is a traditional bond, a kind of emotional

community because it defines a conceptualization of the world that is genuinely that of its nation. It rests on and guarantees the continuation of a tradition. Using a foreign language, therefore, means to cut off one's roots and surrender one's conceptualization of the world to that of the foreign speech community. It is, indeed, as Klopstock (1774) put it, nothing short of treason.

The idea of the individuality of each different language as a peculiar property of the nation who speak it was most subtly and theoretically viably elaborated by Wilhelm von Humboldt. A key notion in his linguistic thinking is that of the character of languages,[6] some essential quality of every language which remains hard to grasp no matter how much one analyzes and describes it, since it is a product of its own past. This is clearly reminiscent of Fichte, and the same Zeitgeist no doubt transpires from their work. Yet, Humboldt reduced the question of the differences between languages and their relationship with nations to systematic investigation. He carried further Herder's notion of the inseparability of language and thought, and thus also came to the conclusion that differences between languages involve differences in understanding and interpreting the world.

Language for Humboldt was essentially a social phenomenon, that is, an achievement that unites individuals while separating groups. These groups are nations, and they cannot be thought of

without language and vice versa, since "our historiography nowhere justifies the assumption that ever a nation existed prior to its language, or, to put it differently, that ever a language was formed solely by the nation to which it belongs" (Humboldt 1823/1963: 69). Hence, "the concept of a nation must be based especially upon language" (1830/1963: 561). "Language by its own force proclaims the national character" (ibid.).

Humboldt's thinking was primarily historical rather than political and so was his concern with the relationship of language and nation. However, the fact that his reasoning was quite detached from current political affairs made it a particularly attractive point of reference for every nationalist who wanted to exploit language for his purposes. Humboldt argued that "the concept of the nation as a host of people constructing a language in a definite manner is directly manifest through language" (ibid.). In principle, this argumentation could be adapted by anyone who wanted to use language for claiming nationhood and fuelling nationalist movements. Which is, in fact, what many nineteenth century nationalists especially in Eastern and Northern Europe and on the Balkan peninsula did (cf. Smith 1981: 46).

Industrialization, urbanization and growing linguistic nationalism in Western Europe influenced the crystallization of ethnic and linguistic identities elsewhere on the continent.

Finland is a good example. Until the nineteenth century, Finnish was basically a spoken language. It emerged very suddenly as a symbol of national identity. The first political parties in Finland were language parties, which came into existence in the middle of the nineteenth century. The point at issue was the traditional Swedish-Finnish bilingualism where Swedish figured as the minority élite language. The speed with which Finnish developed into the dominant language as a result of the nationalist movement is quite remarkable, and so is the relatively little amount of hardship and resentment it produced on the part of the Swedish minority (cf. Allpuro 1976). Estonian, Serbo-Croatian and Albanian are other examples of languages that became symbols of national movements and developed their modern standard form only in the nineteenth century (cf. Haarmann 1975, chp. 3).

Other languages, such as, French, English, Dutch, Danish, Russian and Swedish were, however, well-established as national languages before the surge of nationalism in the nineteenth century. Yet, while the nexus of language and nation had been invoked much earlier, it was put into a consistent ideological context and provided with some scientific underpinning during the romantic period. It was a reaction partly to the French Revolution one of whose aims it was to impose a central national language on all the people of France, and partly to the revolutionary wars that stimulated a sense of anti-French and

anti-foreign resentment, pride and demand for autonomy all over Europe. Language had become the most prominent symbol of nationhood which had consequences for both the internal and external organization of political entities.

Language, nation and state

Stressing the identity of language and nation is one thing, but demanding political autonomy for a linguistically defined group is, of course, something quite different. Languages have always been used to establish or claim a sphere of influence. As imperial languages they have been imposed on dominated ethnic groups by whoever had the power to do so. A uniform code has more often than not been regarded as a matter of administrative convenience for governing a country or empire. However, ideologizing language is a different matter, and if language can be employed as a symbol of national unity by a dominant group, dominated groups may, of course, exert the same logic and make political claims based on their linguistic identity. Thus, while the idea of a national language and its political enforcement may be said to function as a cohesive force, the reverse is also true. Language may be as disruptive a force as any culture marker, and it is clear that the national language-ideology has bread intra-communal strife and, in a sense, created minorities in many countries that have established themselves as states in modern times.

The Greek language movement during the closing decades of the eighteenth century, for instance, played an essential role in the Greeks' struggle against Turkish rule.[7] As the question of the establishment of a modern nation state came on the order of the day, the need for modernizing and standardizing Greek as a genuine national language came to be felt and discussed. Adamantios Korais, a patriot and scholar and the most influential figure in the language movement, wanted to purify Greek from Turkish loan-words as well as from aberrant dialect features in phonology, morphology and syntax. His ideal was to create a language capable of expressing everything and understood by all. Only such a language was suitable for the education and intellectual liberation of the people. This purified Greek was to be the vehicle of education in the free Greece and for the expression of the Greek spirit.

Eventually the Greek nationalist succeeded in shaking off the foreign yoke and seceded from the moribund multilingual Ottoman empire. Korais' peculiarly archaising katharevousa [pure language] was established as the national tongue of the new Greek state. This was a fine solution for the majority, at least as far as their nationalist needs were concerned.[8] But then, new minorities came into existence in the Greek nation state as a byproduct, as it were, of this policy: Turks, Macedonians, Albanians and Rumanians.

The establishment of the katharevousa as the language of the modern Greek nation state is only one example of many that could be presented to illustrate the fact that the politicization of language, while helping one group to achieve its goals, is likely to create new problems for others. Multilingualism is a pervasive, not a marginal phenomenon. The real question about the national language idea is therefore whether language can be politically instrumentalized without becoming a means of suppression and making it ever more difficult for different language groups to live together peacefully. Haugen (1985: 5) observed that "it would actually be hard to point out a single European nation that does not have a minority problem, in the sense of having within its borders a population speaking some language that cannot be regarded as just a dialect of the national tongue."

This is undoubtedly true. The monolingual state and, by consequence, the true nation state, has always been the odd exception rather than the rule.[9] It is by no means self-evident, therefore, why linguistic pluralism is generally regarded as a problem. Beer (1985: 216) has noted that language differences within a polity do not in themselves lead to disruption of national unity. That language movements come into existence, that language becomes a political instrument whose employment actually leaves traces on the political map does not happen often. Weinstein (1979) has asserted that political movements centered

upon a language can affect frontiers "only during key moments in the history of the rise of ethnic and national groupings" (p. 362). What are these key moments, that is, under what circumstances does language become a catalyst of political forces?

In Europe where the nation state as a form of political organization originated, and where most of the great standard languages radiated from a political or cultural center being superposed on other closely related dialects, the national language-ideology had some credibility. The linguistic criterion was of great importance, indeed, in the European context, in marking one nation from another. In Kedourie's influential theory of nationalism language figures as the major defining feature: "A group speaking the same language is known as a nation, and a nation ought to constitute a state" (1961: 68). Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, this belief had many adherents in Europe. Also, the gradual spread of the print culture and general education helped to convince people that the identity of language, nation and state is a natural and hence desirable principle of organizing the world. However, the notion that each nation is, or should be, endowed with a language of its own, comes into serious conflict with demographic and political realities when applied to other parts of the world, Asia, Africa and the Pacific in particular. While this should be obvious in view of the great diversity of languages on these continents, the

national language-ideology was embraced by nationalists there, too. Several different political issues are involved here and interfere with each other.

First of all, the national language question in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa is a question of post-colonial history. That means, briefly, that the slogan 'one language, one nation, one state' has to be worked backwards. Decolonization produced new states, but not necessarily new nations, let alone new national languages. The new states bear the stamp of the colonial legacy, as their boundaries more often than not reflect power relations between the European colonizers rather than ethnic or historical realities in the colonized territories. Thus, while the nation state in Europe was largely a product of the nation whose awakening sense of identity called for the establishment of a politically autonomous organization, it has to be produced by the state, which exists as an institutional structure without a nation that pays loyalty to it, in the new polities of the post-colonial epoch. In this context, language did not offer itself easily as a cohesive symbol. Smith (1971) has pointed out that, in Africa, nationalism is rarely centered upon language since this could lead to "balkanisation." As a matter of fact, after independence many Third World countries have avoided the language issue because of its explosive potential. However, attempts at raising the educational level of the population at large, especially literacy campaigns in rural areas, made policy

discussions and decisions about language eventually inevitable. Thus, in multilingual countries, functional considerations such as the desire to have an administrative language for the whole country and the belief that primary education is more effective if provided in the students' mother tongues came into conflict with each other. And although most Third World countries have many other pressing priorities, they could eventually not ignore the symbolic aspects of the national language question and their importance for the process of nation-building. A brief look at the linguistic heritage of colonialism may clarify this point.

One of the most remarkable characteristics and lasting effects of imperialism was that European languages were superimposed on the native languages of the colonized peoples. This happened partly as a matter of administrative convenience without much ideological zeal, and partly in fulfilling a 'civilizing mission.'[10] The British and the Dutch exemplify the first instance. They did not really care whether English and Dutch were spread widely in their colonies. To the contrary, it were the leaders of the colonized people who demanded instruction in these languages in order to get access to better education (cf. Panikkar 1969: 246; Alisjahbana 1984: 80) while the British and Dutch colonizers long preferred to administer their colonies through coopted local élites in their own languages. The Portuguese and the French exemplify the second instance pursuing, as they did, a policy of active suppression of local languages in

their colonies, linguistic genocide as Haugen (1973) calls it. Calvet (1974: 68) cites the duc de Rovigo's unmistakable statement of the aims of the French education policy in Algeria in the early phase of colonization in 1832:

> Je regard la propagation de l'instruction et de notre langue comme le moyen le plus efficace de faire de progrès à notre domination dans ce pays...Le vrai prodige à opérer serait de remplacer peu à peu l'arabe par le français.

While the French were more blunt than the British in their linguistic imperialism, they were not more successful. Indeed, the spread of English is by far the most striking example of language expansion in all recorded history. Partly this is due, I believe, to a snowball effect and partly to the fact that English relatively early underwent a process of de-nationalization. When the British colonies in North America became independent, the newly emerging nation, with the help of nationalists like Noah Webster and others, also shook off the British standard for the English language, elevating what was until then a regional and basically sub-standard variety to a standard in its own right. The American example and the fact that the spread of English was never an important issue of Britain's colonial policy made it easier for former colonies to retain English after independence. Yet, the ideological problems of post-colonial language policy were, and to some extent still are, considerable.

Even though the British were rather low-key as regards the symbolic value they attached to English in handling their colonial affairs, it became a symbol of colonialism just as

French, Dutch, or any other imperial language. What Gandhi wrote about the native Indian languages and English before independence leaves no doubt about it. As early as 1909 Gandhi subscribed publicly to linguistic nationalism when he wrote that it "would be no exaggeration to say that those who give up their language are traitors to their country and people" (Gandhi 1965: 2). Instead of simply arguing against the use of English by Indians for practical reasons and calling for cultivating the native languages, he adopted the national language-ideology and in 1917 stated that "Hindi[11] alone can become the national language" (ibid. 11). He spoke of the national necessity to learn Hindi in non-Hindi speaking parts of India (ibid. 20). To establish Hindi as the national language of India was one of the dominant themes of the independence movement, and the symbolic value of the language question was highlighted by the Indians rather than the British, as in Gandhi's article of 1946. "People seem to be drunk with the wine of English and they speak English in their clubs, in their home and everywhere. They are denationalized" (ibid. 93, emph. added). After independence had been achieved, Gandhi continued to fight the use of English: "My plea is for banishing English as a cultural usurper as we successfully banished the political rule of the English usurper" (ibid. 116).

There were, of course, other politicians in India as well as in other former colonies who stressed the practical advantages of the colonial languages for governing their newly independent

countries. As languages of higher education, commerce and international communication they were an important link with the outside world providing access to the scientific literature of the West and, this was the expectation, to the development that goes with it.

Also, the somewhat paradoxical function the colonial languages played for independence movements did not go unnoticed. All of what Gandhi wrote about English was, after all, written in English. Thus Ayyangar, an active participant of the Indian independence movement, agues with some justification that "English was the language on which we have built and achieved our freedom" (Srivastava 1979: 85). Many Indians still believe that the English language rather than Hindi provided them with a common means of nation-wide communication and evocation of their inherent feeling of 'Indian-ness' (Le Page 1964: 60). The spread of Hindi, on the other hand, was interpreted, especially in the Dravidian states of the south, "as Hinduisation[12] rather than Indianisation" (Pattanayak 1985: 405). It is not surprising, therefore, that the policy of replacing English by Hindi within 15 years after independence failed and had to be supplanted by the potentially indefinite recognition of English as India's co-official language.

The Indian situation epitomizes the dilemma of the national language question in post-colonial states. The superposed

European language was a medium of creating a feeling of togetherness and a vital instrument of the independence struggle. Yet, it spells one's own inadequacy in the face of foreign dominance and is such a visible remnant of colonialism that many oppose it as a symbol of neo-colonialism.

In many of the inheritor states there is, however, no obvious alternative. Changing the administrative language of a country is not only a matter of linguistic adequacy, that is, of having a language sufficiently standardized and equipped with the technical terminology necessary for advanced forms of communication in government, science, technology and education, and accepted by all parts of the population. It also involves enormous economic costs that have been prohibitive for many post-colonial countries. Not surprisingly, the cases where the colonial language was effectively replaced by a home-grown language after independence are very rare indeed. The replacement of Dutch by Bahasa Indonesia was greatly aided by the Japanese occupation of Indonesia in 1942. Dutch was banned by the occupational forces practically overnight and, because Japanese could not be implemented rapidly as administrative language, the Bahasa Indonesia movement was greatly boosted gaining enough momentum to successfully continue the nation-wide spread of this variety of Malay as Indonesia's national language after independence (cf. Alisjahbana 1971, Lowenberg in this volume). Similarly favorable conditions obtained in Tanzania where Swahili

had been used for centuries as a regional lingua franca and thus could compete with English since it had a written history and was accepted widely by the population. For the rest, the colonial languages have survived decolonization almost everywhere. Attempts to replace them were either avoided, as in most Black African countries, or met with little success, as in the Maghreb where French thrives more than ever in spite of vigorous Arabization programs.

Replacing the colonial language by an autochthonous one is, however, not the only solution for the embarrassing language issue in the Third World. Proponents of the colonial languages in the inheritor countries have found another interesting way out of the dilemma seemingly satisfying nationalist sentiments as well as practical concerns of education and development that allows them to take advantage of the inescapable forces history exercises on language. English will remain in India, writes Pattanayak, a native of Oriya, "because it has become part of the Indian heritage" (op. cit. 406). Heritage, of course, is one of the central themes of nationalist reasoning, and English has, of course, become part of the Indian heritage in a more than symbolic sense. Many politicians, scholars and writers in West Africa make exactly the same point about French. The language of liberation movements in French colonies was French, and francophonie still has an enormous appeal for the African élites who, like Léopold Senghor (1956) subscribe to the idea, "don't

deny your past, make it part of yourself!' A possible answer to the national language ideology of the West and its neo-colonial implications is thus to turn the once prototypical national languages that the European colonial powers spread all over the globe into transnational languages that are no longer any particular nation's property.

Two conflicting tendencies are at work here that are much more obvious and further advanced in English than in French: On the one hand, the practical advantages of the former colonial languages are seen in their having developed into international languages, while on the other hand, they acquire new varieties giving expression to national identities. Indian English, Jamaican English, Philippine English, Singapore English, Nigerian English, etc. have become firmly established on the linguistic map of the world,[13] and like American English they are moving in the direction of becoming a powerful symbol of national identity, which in multilingual and multicultural countries such as India or the countries of Black Africa none of the native languages could ever be.

By interpreting localized forms of English (Strevens 1983) as national characteristics and making them part of a national heritage the practical consideration that, with a national language, it is easier to develop the institutional infrastructure of a polity is provided with some ideological

suprastructure. What Kelman (1971) calls the instrumental attachment to a national system is gradually supplemented with a sentimental attachment.

This process of re-nationalizing the former colonial transnational languages of wider communication once again demonstrates the force of the national language ideology. Why, one might want to ask, have the multilingual countries of Asia and Africa played the national language theme at all? Why is it that a common language is generally seen as such an important ingredient of nation-building? Why are the symbolic values of a national language highlighted in the face of the enormous lack of coincidence between language, nation and state in most parts of the world? Where linguistic diversity exists the effort to establish a national language with ideological zeal is bound to generate conflict. Why, then, is not the multiplicity of languages of a given country stressed as a matter of pride, while the language for communicating on the national level is restricted to a practical convenience without any sentimental value? That a community's sense of identity is bound up with its language seems obvious enough, for a common language secures mutual understanding while at the same time being a link with the past. However, if the concept of a nation has anything at all to do with language, as most theoreticians on this issue have taken for granted, then the nation state is hardly a very natural unit of identification in most parts of the world.

One of the most surprising facts about the post-colonial epoch is that virtually all of the established political frontiers have remained intact and almost none of the inheritor states have fallen apart.[14] For lack of any other political philosophy, the mostly European educated leaders of the post-colonial societies have adopted the assumption that there is a natural division of humanity into nations and that the nation state is the natural and ultimate form of political organization. They have thus embarked on the enterprise of nation building. The essence of nation building is the search for collective identity which the leaders of the inheritor states have by and large recognized as a value in its own right. With it they accepted the dogma of Renaissance nationalism which had assigned language such a prominent role. Ideologically the quest for a national language in Third World countries can be interpreted as a response to the existence of national languages in Europe and their symbolic significance for national integrity. Just as there is no room for a political vacuum in the modern world which is almost completely cut up into more or less autonomous states, it seems to be impossible to dispense with the idea of a national language.

The historical relationships between language, nation and state are, however, incomparable in the countries of Western Europe and their former colonies. The leaders of the new states believe that the business of nation building cannot be

accomplished without a national language. Thus the state puts much emphasis on the spread of a common language in order to inspire a sense of national identity. In the European context, a sense of national identity and its association with a language existed prior to the modern state.

Assessing the national language ideology today, we find that this piece of political philosophy which originated in the Renaissance and came to full bloom together with Romantic nationalism has not lost its force. It still fuels debate and controversy in many parts of the world, East and West, North and South. New languages keep emerging as potential national languages and are turned into vehicles of political claims by their promoters, as for instance Punjabi in India. At the same time, the classical national languages are coming under pressure as more and more population shifts are taking place magnifying linguistic and ethnic diversity in the consolidated nation states. So far, Third World countries have failed to put forth an attractive alternative ideology that combines linguistic pluralism with nationalism. The former colonial powers, on the other hand, while willy-nilly making some allowances for minorities, show no inclination to discard the national language ideology. Thus, in spite of the "new ethnicity" and an increasing awareness of linguistic pluralism almost everywhere, on the one hand, and the ever growing importance of English, the world language of our time, for transnational communication, the

national language question, unmodern as it may seem, is not yet obsolete.

Notes

1. The title of Le Page's 1964 book.

2. For a critical assessment see Donahue 1985.

3. Cf. also Kloss 1952.

4. As late as 1750, Voltaire could write home from Potsdam, "L' allemand est pour les soldats et pour les chevaux." Since the French revolution the situation had somewhat improved--after all, Lessing and Wieland, Goethe and Schiller had published their great works in the meantime--but the scars of the social stigmatization of the German language were not yet completely healed at the turn of the century.

5. Notice, for example, how Kindaichi, a leading Japanese linguist, according to Miller presents essentially the same argument:

> Japanese is "truly and lamentably poor, weak, and deficient in this or that quality or element. But lo and behold! We are still very fortunate to have this language, and...I will be able to demonstrate how this defect really works to our advantage. Finally, a genial coda is appended to each of these praise-for-blame transformations to the effect that if you want to see a language that is really defective, you should take a look at Chinese or Korean, both of which Kindaichi categorizes as being 'sick languages.'Japanese, it goes without saying, is a healthy language" (Miller 1982: 120).

6. Cf. Wilhelm von Humboldt (1830-1835).

7. Cf.Caratzas 1958, Browning 1969.

8. In other respects the establishment of katharevousa as the language of the state, which it was until 1976, was not such a happy language policy. By this measure the standardization of the vernacular was delayed, and a situation of great dialect variety transformed into institutionalized diglossia. Cf. Alexiou 1982.

9.Connor (1978) found that only 9.1 per cent of all states were true nation states in the sense of a polity comprising a homogeneous national group. 37.9 per cent were states dominated by a major ethnic group comprising more than three-quarters of the total population. 23.5 per cent had ethnic majorities ranging between half and three-quarters of the population, and in the remaining 29.5 per cent of all states the largest ethnic group accounted for less than half of the population.

10. For a fuller discussion of the differences between the British policy of indirect rule and the French colonial concept of assimilation see Spencer 1974; Coulmas 1985, chapter IV.

11. At that time, Gandhi was not yet completely consistent in his terminology using both Hindi and Hindustani. This is an important difference since Hindi implies Sanskritisation which is unacceptable to the Muslim population. Hindustani, by contrast, a variety that had evolved out of contact between Hindi and Urdu speakers in the bazaars and barracks, was seen by Gandhi as having an integrative potential. In his later writings he was careful usually to make a clear distinction between the two. It was Hindustani what he promoted rather than Hindi.

12. This should not be taken to have any religious implications, after all, the southern Indians are Hindus. What Pattanayak means by "Hinduisation" is "domination of the South by the North."

13.This development has attracted much attention lately. English has acquired a plural form not only in the title of books (e.g. Platt, Weber, Ho 1984), but a scientific journal, World Englishes, has been founded whose declared purpose is to study "English as an international and intranational language."

14.Bangladesh is, of course, an important exception. What it illustrates, most importantly in the present context, is that markers of national identity and allegiance are variable. The same Bengali people who stressed their religious identity in order to creating the new state of Pakistan while downplaying the Bengali language as a common bond with their Hindu brethren in 1947, chose to assert their linguistic identity in breaking away from Pakistan and creating the independent state of Bangladesh in 1971 (cf. Das Gupta 1985).

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